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AUTHOR Williams, Teresa D.
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ABSTRACT

After pointing out the problems women face as they try to enter the ranks of corporate management (popular issues for discussion in the business press), this paper argues for better career planning for women in public relations. The paper considers the model of the structured retail career path which has contributed to the rise of women to executive retail positions, and discusses how the field of public relations can learn from the retail occupations and their experiences with feminization. The topic is explored in the paper through a review of textbooks, articles, and industry association publications. The paper concludes that women in public relations rarely have a structured career path to follow and suggests that women in public relations should actively seek their employers' career guidelines and determine whether public relations is considered to be part of the "path to the top." (Four diagrams are included, and 44 references are appended.) (Author/MS)

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ABSTRACT

CLIMBING THE CAREER LADDER: A RETAIL MODEL FOR WOMEN IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

by Teresa Williams
School of Journalism
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio 43210
614-292-1084

This paper examines how the field of public relations can learn from the retail occupation and its experiences with feminization. The structured retail career path is examined as a characteristic contributing to the rise of women to executive retail positions. This topic is explored through a review of textbooks, articles, and industry association publications. Findings indicate that women in public relations rarely have a structured career path to follow. This paper recommends that women in public relations actively seek their employers' career guidelines and determine whether public relations is considered to be part of the path to the top.

Paper submitted to Student Research Paper Competition
Public Relations Division/
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

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by Teresa Williams
School of Journalism
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio 43210

CLIMBING THE CAREER LADDER:

A RETAIL MODEL FOR WOMEN IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

The problems women face as they try to enter the ranks of corporate management appear to be popular issues for discussion in the business press. In some cases, these articles have described the female problem as one of eliminating the stereotype of women as staff personnel (Nelson-Hurchler, 1987).

The editors of Working Woman magazine describe staff jobs as ones "that are low in power and not on the career path to the top" and they state that "women in business often find themselves in a female ghetto in the new corporate landscape" (Bryant, 1984, p. 18). Included among the editors' descriptions of staff level or "ghetto" positions are those jobs found in the field of public relations.

Whether or not the public relations profession is labeled as a "ghetto position", it is difficult to dispute that public relations is becoming a field dominated by females (Cline, 1987). Membership of the International Association of Business Communicators is more than 60 percent female (Cline et al., 1986) and women constitute more than 50 percent of the Public Relations Society of America membership (Hunt and Thompson, 1987).

However, it seems that the predominance of females in the communications field begins at the college level. Peterson (1988), through an annual enrollment survey of journalism and mass communications programs, has noted a gender switch occurring in the nation's journalism schools. After decades of a 60:40 ratio in favor of males, enrollment ratios have switched in the 1980's to approximately 60 percent female and 40 percent male (Peterson, 1988). In addition, Hunt and Thompson (1987) note that

the membership of the Public Relations Student Society of America, in some university chapters, shows a 10 to 1 female majority.

But it appears that the growing proportion of female students and professionals in public relations has had little influence upon women's earning power in the field. A survey of public relations practitioners (Broom and Dozier, 1986) revealed that women in public relations earn less than their male co-workers even if the education and experience levels of both sexes are equal. The survey also found that women tend to hold the lower-level position of communications technician rather than the title and job duties of public relations manager.

As technicians, women in public relations may tend to become specialists, a situation shared by women in many other fields (Loden, 1987). Labeled as specialists, women may also be seen as lacking the general management skills necessary for career advancement. To overcome this problem, Cline (1987) recommends that women in public relations plan their whole career and broaden their range of skills to include management experience in goal-setting, analysis, and planning.

But are women in public relations prepared to plan their own careers? Do their educational programs and the companies they work for provide any career planning assistance? Are there any standards in public relations against which women can measure their progress?

This paper attempts to answer these questions and point out the need for better career planning for women in public relations. This need is emphasized by comparing the career planning process in public relations to the career standards in another field that is predominantly female--retailing. As suggested by Form and Parcel (1987), communications

occupations may be able to learn from the feminization experiences of other professions.

Retailing employs a similar percentage of women as public relations. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (1987), the annual average number of employees in management and public relations jobs in 1986 was 550,400, with women numbering 298,300 or 54.2 percent of the total. Similarly, women represented 52.9 percent of the total number of employees in the retail sector in 1986.

Unlike the field of public relations, where women are remaining in lower-level positions, retailing is considered a success field for women (Fisher, 1987). One survey ("Women Climbing", 1988) indicates that women are indeed climbing the retail ladder, as they are holding nine percent of top presidential positions at leading department stores. In addition, the survey results lend credence to the assumption that this percentage will rise in the next few years due to the high number of women currently in senior positions directly below the rank of chief executive officer.

In order to learn how women are making it to the top in retailing, it is necessary to examine the career ladder they climbed. This retail career structure, and the manner in which it is taught to students as well as retail professionals, is reviewed in this paper as a model for women in public relations.

APPROACH:

An assumption was made that women are making it to senior management positions in retailing by following a structured career model. This assumption was tested by examining the department store retail career plan as it is described in retail literature. Retail career paths were studied

as presented in textbooks and also in articles published in retail trade periodicals. Also included in the research were several college recruiting brochures, which had been distributed to a university placement office by various retailers. Finally, the career histories of four women who made it to the top of their retail career ladders were studied as case examples.

In a similar manner, the career path for positions in corporate public relations was examined as presented in textbooks and articles. Also reviewed was career related information found in publications distributed by the International Association of Business Communicators and the Public Relations Society of America.

DEPARTMENT STORE CAREERS:

The retailing segment is composed of several store types ranging from general merchandise retailers such as department stores and discount stores, to specialty retailers, which may sell only one merchandise line such as apparel or sporting goods. This paper will focus on the retail store type, which at this time, offers one of the most structured professional management career paths and typically recruits on college campuses (Davidson, Sweeney, & Stampfl, 1988). This retailer is the conventional department store.

Most conventional department store chains in the United States are multi-unit operations, usually centrally-managed from a headquarters store. The chain may consist of five to 20 or more stores, often with a downtown unit, suburban branches, and remote branches in other cities or states. Given the large amount of consolidation in the industry, many department stores are operating divisions of a larger ownership group, which provides financial and staff support (Davidson et al., 1988).

The large size of department store chain operations requires that they be professionally managed using departmentalized merchandising methods. Davidson et al. (1988) describe these retailers as "typically run by career executives with specialized skills" in a company that is "hierarchically organized with clear lines of authority and responsibility leading to well-structured management development programs and career planning for management personnel. Job descriptions are used to allocate responsibility and roles within the structure....Departmentalization also permits regularized and somewhat predictable movement for managers as their careers progress" (p. 809).

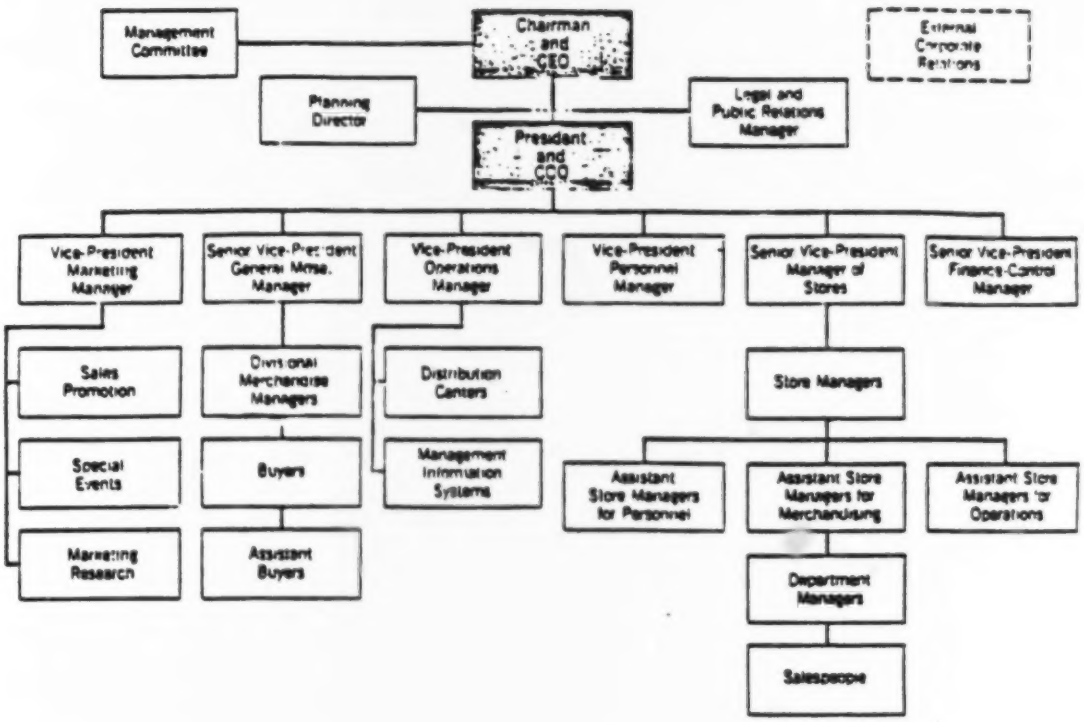
An example of the typical organization of a large multi-unit department store is presented in Exhibit 1 on page 6. The major areas of retail management typically found in department stores include merchandising, store operations, personnel, administration or finance and control, and marketing or sales promotion.

Seventy-five to 80 percent of the professional positions are likely to be in merchandising and store operations, and each represents two separate lines of promotion along the retail career ladder. However, the most common career progression usually involves alternating between positions in both the merchandising and operations lines (Davidson et al., 1988).

Most entry-level management trainees begin their careers in one of these two areas, and even management personnel in the support roles of retail management such as personnel or finance are required to gain a strong familiarity with merchandising and operations to perform their job duties well.

Exhibit 1

Typical Organization of a Large Multi-unit Department Store



Note. From Retailing Management (6th ed.) (p. 228) by W. R. Davidson, D. J. Sweeney, and R. W. Stampfl, 1988, New York: John Wiley & Sons. Reprinted by permission of author.

The fact that the merchandising and operations areas are considered the key line positions in retailing has serious implications for females seeking a professional career in retailing. Mason and Meyer (1984) found that many women who entered the retail field in the late 1950s and 1960s were directed toward staff positions in advertising or personnel. Mason and Meyer suggest that females seeking a committed career in retailing need early training in key line positions to be considered for top management positions.

This suggestion is very important when considering that women make up the greatest percentage of total department store employees. The U.S. Department of Labor (1987) reports that, in 1986, the average annual number of women employed by department stores was 1,355,100, or 68.5 percent of total department store employees.

Fisher (1987) notes that retailing traditionally was a field which employed many women, but held them back. For decades, the successful women in retailing were buyers. Now they are moving beyond the buying office to titles like senior vice-president and chief executive officer. The Employee Relations Bulletin (1985) quotes a retail recruiter telling college students about career-pathing, "We're not here for a buyer. We're here for vice-presidents" (p.1).

It appears that this recruiter's claims are not inflated. Bamford (1986) found that retailers often end up with the "pick of the litter" on college campuses due to retailers' recruiting skills and emphasis of training programs designed along structured career paths. Most of the retailers questioned in an interview (Abend, 1985) say they believe in promoting from within, and they encourage employees to move up the ladder

by creating specific training programs and paths for them.

This dedication to employees is especially important for the career advancement of women. Stern (1987) suggests that women start their retail careers at department stores because they offer the most extensive training programs.

Buying was traditionally the most profitable career path in retailing, but this is changing. According to Hartlein (1986), store managers are gaining more respect. Hartlein states, "For the successful store manager, the career path could lead to a bigger store or even promotion to regional vice-president, senior vice-president for stores, or back to the central organization as a divisional or general merchandise manager" (p.8).

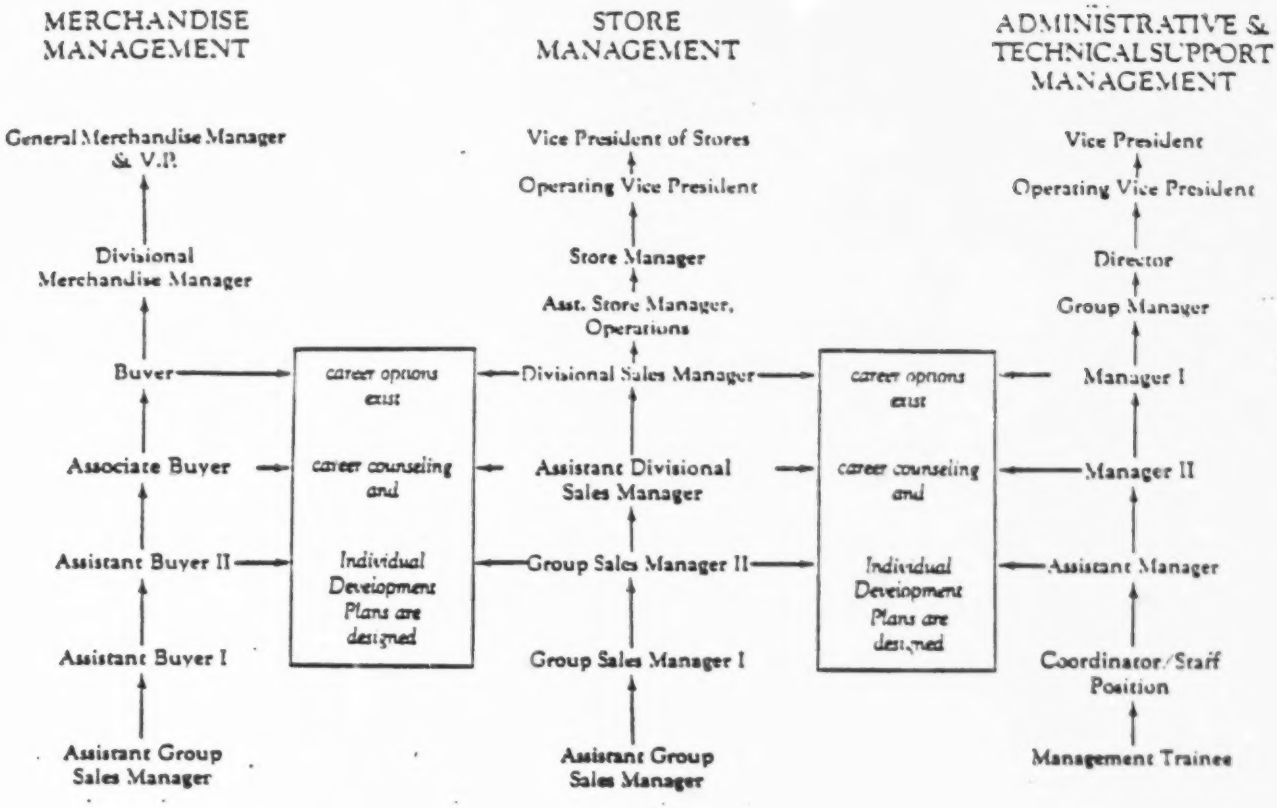
RETAIL CAREER PATHS--AN EXAMPLE:

Foley's, a division of Federated Department Stores, is composed of 38 stores serving the Southwest in major markets such as Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio. The company's training program was recognized in a Purdue University survey as number one in the nation (Foley's, 1987). The career growth chart at Foley's as shown in Exhibit 2 on page 9 portrays the variety of career paths a professional may follow from the entry-level position.

Not only can an individual at this department store follow directly upward in a career path such as merchandising, store management, or administrative or technical support, but he or she can move among these various paths during a career. Such career opportunities are explored during regular career counseling sessions in which individual development plans are designed. Beyond an initial ten-week training program, employees receive ongoing evaluations to recognize their weaknesses and develop

Exhibit 2

Career Growth Paths At Foley's



Note. From "Foley's: A commitment to excellence" by Foley's, 1987, Recruiting Brochure, p.4.

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personal management skills.

Foley's is not alone in its dedication toward employee career development. In a session on employee development (Employee Relations Bulletin, 1986), the vice presidents of human resources at two other major department store chains urged a return to executive development. Bill Goodlatte, senior vice president, human resources, Jordan Marsh, said, "Our approach is to the ongoing development after they have joined our organizations and completed the training. We don't just throw them into the pool without any swimming lessons. We keep them challenged and motivated while continuing to improve their technical and management skills. As a result, we can keep good people in the organization" (p.1).

Bamford (1986) reports that most of the top executives at retailing companies went through training programs and cites Macy's chairman Edward Finkelstein, Bloomingdale's Marvin Traub, and May Company chairman David Farrell as examples. But not only have males succeeded in retailing by following a structured career path. Women as well are climbing the career ladder to the top. While it is recognized that not all women in retailing rise to top management ranks, this paper is deliberately focused on four women who have been successful and act as role models. It would be appropriate to include parallel biographies of successful women in public relations. However, the inclusion of these additional profiles is beyond the scope of this paper.

FOUR SUCCESSFUL WOMEN IN RETAILING:

--Verna Gibson, President, Limited Stores:

Verna Gibson, 46, is president of the flagship division of one of the country's leading women's apparel specialty stores. Gibson has said that

throughout her career she has been a "woman in a man's world", but she has never felt that to be an obstacle (Lashinsky, 1986, p. 17). In the 1970's, Les Wexner, founder and chairman of the Limited, told Gibson she would never make it to general merchandise manager. But she proved him wrong by stepping into the presidency position in 1985.

Gibson's career has always been in retailing from the age of 17 when she started as a retail clerk for a women's specialty store. In 1971, she joined the Limited as a merchandise trainee, was promoted to divisional merchandise manager in 1977, and three years later was again promoted to executive vice president. Now as president of the company's largest division, her challenge is to maintain growth and keep in step with the store's targeted population (Soloman, 1987).

--Judith Hofer, Chief Executive Officer, Famous Barr Department Stores:

Judith Hofer, 46, is chief executive officer of Famous Barr, an 18-store, $500 million-a-year division of May Department Stores Company. Hofer says that "being a buyer is a terrific job, but women are moving up and out of it. You see a lot more senior vice presidents and divisional vice presidents around" (Fisher, 1987, p. 84).

Hofer started her retail career at age 15 as a part-time clerk at Meier & Frank, another department store division of May Company. She moved through the merchandising career path, including a stint as a buyer, before becoming chief executive officer in 1981 at the age of 39. She says that the hardest step for women in retailing now is from senior vice president to president (Fisher, 1987).

--Sally Frame-Kasaks, President, Talbots; Vice President, General Mills:

Sally Frame-Kasaks, 42, is the president of Talbots, a women's apparel

chain and division of General Mills. As president, Frame-Kasaks expanded the chain to 115 stores, and Talbots' sales have increased 75% since she joined the company two years ago ("Sally Frame-Kasaks", 1987).

Frame-Kasaks began her career as a department manager at Lord & Taylor in 1966. She joined Garfinckels in 1969 and left as fashion merchandising director in 1976 to join Saks Fifth Avenue as general merchandise manager. In 1979, she joined Ann Taylor, a women's apparel retailer, and left as president and chief executive officer in 1985 to join Talbots in the same capacity.

As one of a select group of women in executive retail positions, Frame-Kasaks believes the "woman's perspective has brought a focus on the service dimension of retailing. We have provided an environment that lets the customer speak" ("Sally Frame-Kasaks", 1987, p. 26).

--Barbara Bass, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, I. Magnin & Company:

Barbara Bass, 36, is chairman and chief executive officer of I. Magnin, a 26-store division of Federated Department Stores. As the first woman in charge of a Federated division, she oversees a business with revenues over $300 million.

Bass started her retail career in 1972 as an assistant buyer at Burdines and moved in 1975 to Macys where she worked as a buyer and divisional merchandise manager. In 1980, she joined Bloomingdales, another Federated division, as an operating vice president for branch store merchandising, and in 1985 she was promoted to executive vice president and general merchandise manager. Two years later she was chosen as chairman and chief executive officer at I. Magnin.

Regarding her position, Bass says it has "created great excitement

within Federated, especially among female buyers and middle managers. There are other corporations where women do not feel that they can get ahead. It's unhealthy and the companies tend to lose talented people" ("Bass gets", 1987, p.10).

CAREERS IN CORPORATE PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Public relations jobs may be found in a wide variety of organizations including professional associations, labor unions, schools, non-profit firms, the government, and public relations agencies. But the greatest amount of public relations activity is found in business and industry (Rotman, 1983).

It is not reasonable to compare the career path of the large department store to a small public relations agency where a small number of individuals may perform all activities. In small public relations departments and agencies, the overlapping of roles and functions does not readily accommodate a structured career path.

Because of its large size and diversity of functions, the nature of the corporate public relations department does lend itself to comparison with the large department store. The size of corporate public relations departments varies widely, but it is not unusual for some very large companies to have staff exceeding 100 persons (Moore & Kalupa, 1985).

Both the corporate public relations department and the large department store require a variety of individuals with different skills and functions to work together towards supporting a common goal. A closer examination of the structure and functions of a large corporate public relations department will reveal how a well-designed career path will enhance the upward career mobility of professionals in the organization.

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS:

Moore and Kalupa (1985) state that "the structure of public relations organizations is not standardized, but their design is affected by the size and number of publics served, funds available, and objectives of the public relations program" (p.146). Usually, public relations departments in a large corporation are organized according to activities and functions. These functions may include press and media relations, special events, internal communications, or public affairs (Simon, 1984).

Large corporations usually establish a central corporate headquarters public relations staff with public relations activities handled also at the division or plant level by staff who report directly to the heads of divisions or plants (Simon, 1984). Besides division by function, public relations staffs may be organized by publics, geographical region, or a combination of each.

An exploratory study of the horizontal structure of public relations departments (Grunig, L., 1987) found that 53 percent of the public relations departments studied are organized by a combination of structures, predominantly by public, by technique, or by internal client. Only 12 percent reported a single horizontal structure, and that is by public (p. 21).

The horizontal structures which provided the framework for this exploratory study were developed by James Grunig and Todd Hunt (1984). These seven common horizontal structures include structure by public, management process, communication techniques, geographic region, account executive system, organizational subsystem, or a combinations of methods (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

According to Simon (1984) public relations is a staff function, but

the department itself is managed as though it were a line unit. Several hundred public relations professionals may be assigned to different departments headed by a vice president in charge of public relations, communications, or public affairs. In smaller firms, this position may carry the title of public relations director or manager (Moore & Kalupa, 1985).

Pires (1986) notes that job titles vary from company to company but, generally, entry-level personnel are "specialists" or "staff writers". The next level includes "coordinators", "supervisors", or "editors", and then "managers" or "senior specialists". Finally, the department may have "directors", reporting to the department head (p.78).

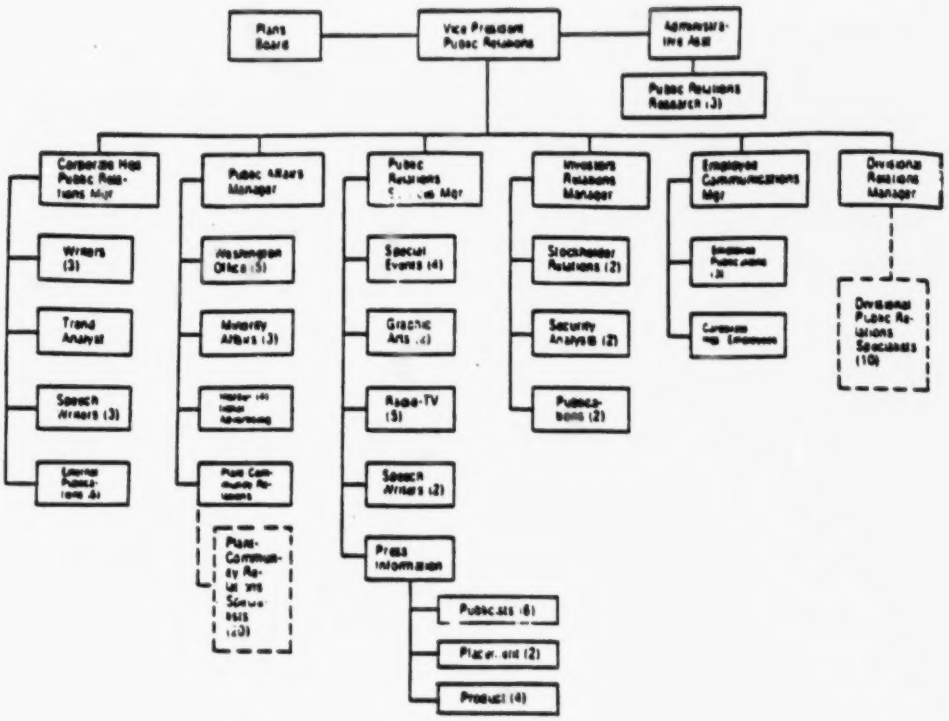
An example of the organization structure of a large public relations department is presented in Exhibit 3 on page 16. As previously described, departments are organized along various functions and roles. Exhibit 4 on page 17 provides the organization chart for the public relations department of Chrysler Corporation. At Chrysler, the public relations department is organized not only by function but also by division and geographic region.

The public relations department of a large corporation functions as a branch of the company but in an interactive capacity. Pires (1986) states that the corporate communications role is to function in support of the company's business objectives. Some of these support forms include advice and counseling, communications services, issues management, and communications action programs.

In another form of interaction, the public relations department in a large corporation may share functions with the marketing or advertising departments or both. A study of public relations departments and their

Exhibit 3

Organization Structure of a Large Public Relations Department



Note. From Public Relations: Concepts and practices (p. 88) by R. Simon, 1984, New York: John Wiley & Sons.

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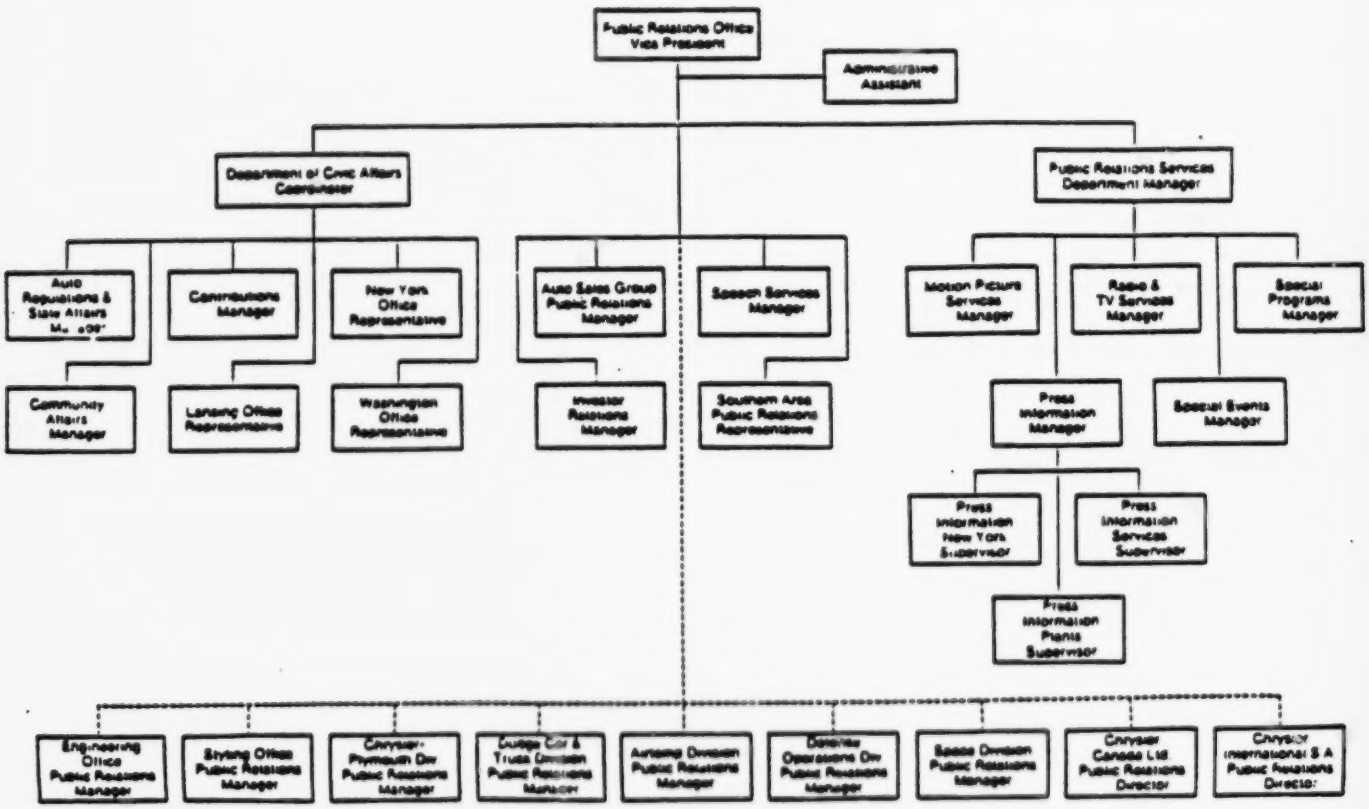
Exhibit 4

Organization Chart of the Public Relations Department of the Chrysler Corporation, Detroit, Michigan


Public Relations Office Vice President
Administrative Assistant
Department of Civic Affairs Coordinator
Public Relations Services Department Manager
Auto Regulations & State Affairs Manager
Communications Manager
New York Office Representative
Auto Sales Group Public Relations Manager
Speech Services Manager
Motion Picture Services Manager
Radio & TV Services Manager
Special Programs Manager
Community Affairs Manager
Lansing Office Representative
Washington Office Representative
Investor Relations Manager
Southern Area Public Relations Representative
Press Information Manager
Special Events Manager
Press Information New York Supervisor
Press Information Services Supervisor
Press Information Plants Supervisor
Engineering Office Public Relations Manager
Styling Office Public Relations Manager
Chrysler-Plymouth Div Public Relations Manager
Dodge Car & Truck Division Public Relations Manager
Airtemp Division Public Relations Manager
Defense Operations Div Public Relations Manager
Space Division Public Relations Manager
Chrysler Canada Ltd Public Relations Director
Chrysler International S A Public Relations Director

Note. From Public relations, principles, cases, and problems (9th ed.) (p. 150) by H. F. Moore and F. B. Kalupa, 1985, Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin.

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relationship to marketing and advertising (Grunig, L., 1987) found that 24 percent of respondents felt they had a close relationship to marketing and advertising. In this survey, "the distinctions between functions are clear, but some interaction is not unusual" (p. 27). Grunig also found in small organizations, it is not unusual for the same person to handle all of the advertising, marketing, and public relations functions.

ROLES:

In order to plan the career path structure of a corporate public relations department, it is important to identify the various roles filled by public relations practitioners. Grunig and Hunt (1984) describe these roles in the public relations textbook, Managing Public Relations. The two dominant public relations roles are communication technician and communication manager, and the manager role may be broken down into three subroles. These are expert prescriber, communications facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator. Two middle-level public relations management roles include the media relations role and the communications liaison role (p.91).

Broom and Dozier (1986) report that a public relations practitioner plays all of these roles in varying degrees. However, they also found that gender plays a significant part in determining these roles, with women playing the communication technician role with greater frequency than do men. This finding has negative implications for women as the same study showed that those individuals in the manager's role earned higher salaries and reported greater levels of job satisfaction. Broom and Dozier state that "professional growth in public relations is a function of the practitioner's gender and role" (p. 55).

However, this apparent lowered level of job growth experienced by the female public relations practitioner may be partially attributed to women's high level of career interruptions. Theus (1987), in a study of male and female student alumni, found that "women were 13 times as likely to have left work for family responsibilities or child bearing" (p. 47). Upon re-entering their field, women usually re-entered at a lower level or at the same level (Theus, 1987).

Given these findings regarding job status and career interruptions, it seems imperative that women become familiar with the structure and roles of the corporate public relations department so they may plan their climb up the career path. But Howard (1982) states that public relations is not one of the easiest occupations to enter because there is no established career path to follow. Further, Grunig and Hunt (1984) report some negative findings of a study by Group Attitudes Corporation, the research arm of Hill and Knowlton:

"Management does not--for the most part--see the public relations professional as having the option to move up through the corporate ranks to a top management position. Furthermore, they express serious doubts as to whether or not the public relations person can keep his or her job" (p.537).

The findings of this study seem to be true when examining the career paths followed by the members of the baby boom generation with careers in public relations. Condino (1987) reports that, of the baby boomers in public relations which she questioned, most had "no articulated plan for the future" and "no plan had really guided them to where they are now. They seem to be waiting for some life-altering event to guide them" (p.22).

Condino also found that the general goals of this generation of public relations practitioners include moving out of publications and media work into key management areas. But, Condino states, "These goals seem more founded on optimism than on planning, even among the most seasoned professionals" (p. 30).

How then does the career path of corporate public relations compare to the career path of retailing? While it seems that the structure and roles of corporate public relations have been defined by various individuals and reported in several studies, these guidelines do not seem to be well-known or followed by public relations practitioners, especially among women.

Conversely, there are plenty of articles and other text published as evidence that department store retailers are abiding by the career structure dictated in retail studies. Not only are retailers following this well-defined structure, but they are also using it to recruit top-notch professionals and counsel them throughout their careers. Through these methods, department store professionals, including women, have the opportunity to become aware of the structured career path in retailing, and they may strive to climb the ladder by filling well-defined roles.

Perhaps women in public relations can learn from retailing by seeking and adhering to better-defined career guidelines and levels of public relations development. Two such examples of guidelines are already available in publications of well-known public relations organizations.

PUBLIC RELATIONS CAREER GUIDELINES:

--"Professional Development Guide"

by the Public Relations Society of America

In 1979, Kalman B. Druck and Ray Hiebert co-authored a professional

development guide to help public relations practitioners assess their professional development needs or plan a career growth plan. The guide divides the public relations career ladder into four experience levels and into three areas of skill and knowledge. The four career levels, as defined in the professional development guide, are Level I--Beginning Professional; Level II--Staff Professional; Level III--Professional Manager; and Level IV--Senior Professional. Individuals may be categorized into these levels depending upon their number of years in the field, their management, reporting and supervisory relationships, and their job responsibilities within the organization (Public Relations Society of America, 1984).

The professional development guide lists the three broad areas of skill and knowledge as management, communications, and knowledge of publics. These skills can be assessed by individuals at each career level through a series of needs assessment charts, which are also found in the professional development guide. Completion of these charts allow public relations professionals to measure their strengths and needs by rating their proficiency in the activities listed.

--"An Outline for Career Analysis and Development"

by the International Association of Business Communicators

In a 1985 article in Communication World, titled "Using the IABC matrix to design a personal career plan", an outline for career analysis and development is provided. This chart includes job titles designated along seven levels of achievement found in one of six areas of practice such as corporate public relations, government departments, or public relations agencies (Walker, 1985).

This chart may be used by a public relations professional to help gauge progress along a personal career path. Each level includes not only a job title but also identifies up to twelve different competency skills which generally are acquired during that point in one's career.

COMPANY GUIDELINES:

The two guidelines offered by the professional associations are broad in nature and could be used by public relations practitioners across a variety of organizations. But it is also important for each individual to be aware of any career guidelines which may already be available at his or her company. Cline (1987) recommends that women find out what their corporation's attitude is towards women and to learn what career tracks other women have followed. She adds that some of the major agencies have very defined career tracks.

One such example of a well-defined career track is the Communicator Development Program (CDP) offered by Dow Chemical Company (1987). Dow, the second largest chemical company in the United States, operates the career development program out of its corporate headquarters in Midland, MI.

The CDP allows personnel in Dow's communication department to gain a better understanding of the company, develop skills, and identify personal career goals and ways to achieve them. The CDP includes assignments in marketing communications, media relations, product department communications, manufacturing division public relations, and public and government affairs.

Each individual in the program is evaluated on a weekly basis, with a summary evaluation and feedback at the conclusion of each project. At the

end of the program, which may last from 12 to 15 months, the CDP professional is placed in a permanent career position based on available openings and the individual's preference and performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based upon the findings of the research completed for this paper, several recommendations are offered so that communications/journalism departments might better prepare their students for future careers. These recommendations might also be used by corporate public relations departments for assisting in the career growth of their professionals.

For Students

Students studying public relations should be able to utilize a "career library" located within the communications/journalism department at their schools. This library should include career information as it is found in textbooks, industry trade articles, or guidebooks such as the one published by the Public Relations Society of America. In addition, students should have access to any career path brochures, which may be provided by corporate public relations departments for recruitment purposes. Also, universities with a public relations program should consider offering a career seminar for graduating students.

If the university department does not make career planning information readily available, students be encouraged to seek this information on their own. Several resources that provide information on public relations careers were identified in this paper, and these resources could be used by students intent on career planning. Career education is especially important for students who need to understand the functions and roles of a corporate

public relations department to make a sound evaluation of potential job offers.

The research conducted for this paper indicates that climbing the career path in most companies requires knowledge of a broad range of management techniques. Therefore, it would be to the student's advantage to attend and complete courses outside of the public relations department in subjects such as business and liberal arts to acquire a balanced educational background.

For Public Relations Professionals

Corporate public relations departments should design a career path to fit the particular needs of their companies. This career path information should be readily available to entry-level employees as well as established professionals. Periodically, career counseling and education sessions should be arranged so that each employee in the public relations department can measure his or her progress along a career path.

Given the statistics regarding women's tendency to stay in lower-level public relations positions, a final recommendation is offered specifically for women: Women whose career plans include moving out of the public relations department to senior management positions in other departments should determine whether their companies consider public relations to be part of the path to the top. If a company does not consider public relations to be a key line position, then it may be best for those women seeking advancement to transfer among other departments to gain knowledge and experience in a broad range of management skills.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

This paper has examined how the field of public relations can learn

from the retail occupation and its experiences with feminization. The structured retail career path was studied as a characteristic contributing to the rise of women to executive retail positions, and four case examples were included to illustrate women's climb to the top in retailing.

In a similar manner, the structure and functions of the corporate public relations department were described to focus upon the need for a well-defined career path in this feminized profession. Women's struggles in the field and women's tendency to fill and remain in lower-level roles were recognized. Suggestions to overcome these problems were offered in the form of existing public relations career guidelines as well as recommendations for further career education to be offered by communications schools and employers.

Based upon this research, the following conclusions have been reached:

--The field of retailing has developed solid career paths and education programs for its professionals, and these guidelines have contributed to the rise of both men and women to the top.

--Conversely, professionals in public relations rarely have a structured career path to follow. Although the structure and roles of corporate public relations have been defined and reported in various studies, these guidelines do not seem to be well-known or followed by public relations practitioners, especially women.

--The career path to the top in public relations favors generalists over specialists, and management positions in public relations require a broad range of skills rather than expertise in one specialty area. Therefore, women in public relations should be encouraged to move among

areas in public relations departments as a method of climbing the career ladder.

--Finally, this topic should be recognized as an area for further study. With additional research, those women who are students and professionals in the field of public relations might someday find a well-defined public relations model for climbing the career ladder.

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